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Phil Perkins

The Bucchero Childbirth Stamp on a Late Orientalizing Period Shard from Poggio Colla

Abstract: A unique stamp on a shard of bucchero found at Poggio Colla during the summer of 2011 represents what appears to be a scene of childbirth with a crouching mother delivering a baby. The artifact's closest Etruscan iconographic parallels—the scenes found on the Archaic relief slabs from Tarquinia—illustrate a crouching female but without the baby. Additional Etruscan scenes combine the crouching pose with a range of animals, suggesting an association with the “Mistress of the Animals.” A survey of the few related images from around the Mediterranean not only establishes the rarity of childbirth images in the classical world but also the uniquely Etruscan character of the shard's imagery. When its context—a redeposited occupation stratum of a settlement dated to the end of the Orientalizing period—is assessed in conjunction with its iconography, it becomes possible to view the stamp's imagery as alluding to concepts of fertility and reproduction tied to the power of nature and regeneration, all of which would have been appropriate in an Etruscan banqueting context attended by elite men and women.

Keywords: Etruscan, Bucchero, Childbirth, Poggio Colla, Orientalizing

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Introduction

Poggio Colla is a hill near Vicchio, 45 km northeast of Florence. The hill is strategically located above the River Sieve where it escapes from the ring of mountains that form the Mugello basin in the northern part of the Province of Florence. Poggio Colla controls access to the narrow valley that contains routes between the middle valley of the Arno and Northern Italy. It therefore sits astride a major communication route from Rome to the Po valley via the Tiber valley, the Val di Chiana and the Arno valley that then follows the River Sieve into the Mugello basin and over the Futa pass to Bologna. Thus Poggio Colla controls the



Fig. 1: Photograph of the shard (Photo: P.Perkins).

Fig. 2: Drawing of the shard (Drawn by Morgan Burgess).

route of contact between the cities of inland Etruria (e.g., Orvieto, Chiusi, Cortona, Arezzo and Fiesole) and areas north of the Apennines, and ultimately, continental Europe. The North-South route via the Mugello was not the only passage over the Apennines, but it was the shortest route between inland Etruria and the Etruscan Po Valley.

Since 1994, excavations at Poggio Colla have gradually revealed an important local focus of ritual activity that was intensely active from the Orientalizing period to the likely Roman conquest of the Mugello in 187 BCE.¹ During the summer of 2011, excavations under the auspices of the Poggio Colla Field School made an unusual discovery. At first, the small shard of fine ceramic—Find No. 11-003 (Figs. 1–2)—attracted some attention because it was decorated with stamped motifs, but this is not uncommon at Poggio Colla where bucchero ceramics are often stamped.² In the conservation laboratory, after it was cleaned, it was discovered that the stamp contained a human figure, a first at Poggio Colla, but

¹ Thomas 2012, 31–6; Warden 2009; Warden and Thomas 1999; Warden, Thomas and Galloway 1999.

² Perkins forthcoming.

not unknown in the local district. What made the stamp unique, however, was that the figure was a female, and some of the excavation team read the scene as showing a child's birth. If this interpretation is correct, then the shard's imagery would be unprecedented in Etruscan art.

In this article, the implications and significance of the shard's iconography are explored. Following a detailed description of the find, additional Etruscan representations that share some features with the stamp are considered. Given the trend in Etruscan studies to see the Etruscans as a Mediterranean people in their own right, rather than a people living in a small part of Italy and culturally dominated by Greek influence, similar images from other parts of the Mediterranean are also analyzed. This study reveals that there were very few comparable images produced in Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and Southwest Asia. Furthermore, analysis of the shard's iconography, contexts and functions, along with a more general consideration of childbirth in the ancient Mediterranean, enables the interpretation of the Etruscan scene from Poggio Colla as a very rare detailed representation of human fertility.

Part I: The Poggio Colla Bucchero Shard (Find 11-003)

Description

The bucchero shard was found in trench 41, stratum 41-1-5-1 which is part of an extensive layer that extends over the north western area of the hilltop at Poggio Colla. The layer is charcoal-rich and contains abundant finds of bucchero, utilitarian ceramics and animal bone consistent with domestic activity. It is currently interpreted as redeposited material derived from the burning of the first Etruscan phase of occupation at the site. The earliest strata of Poggio Colla are not yet well known but the excavation has yielded sporadic prehistoric finds (knapped stone) although no definite Bronze Age or Iron Age material has been identified. Nevertheless, a partially excavated pit may represent an early Etruscan hut on the southern side of the hilltop. A settlement of huts, subsequently burned, may have provided the material later deposited on the northern side of the hilltop which included the shard under consideration. Subsequently, a rectilinear structure of cut stone blocks was built over the layer. This may have been the first stone sanctuary on the site. The sanctuary was later redeveloped, becoming more monumental with stone column bases; ultimately, it was expanded to form a more extensive hilltop settlement.

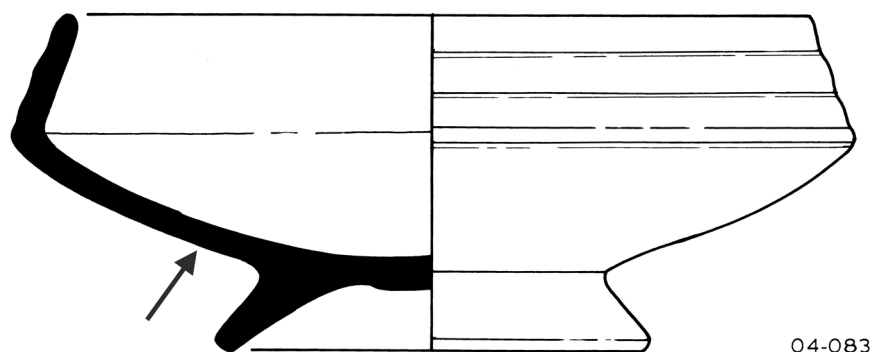


Fig. 3: Bucchero Bowl (cat no. 04-083) from Poggio Colla, indicating the likely position of the stamp (N.B. this is not a drawing of the vessel upon which the stamp was found). (Drawn by Susan Bird).

The shard, therefore, derived from a secondary deposit of the burnt remains of a settlement. At the present time, we know very little about that settlement, but the finds, although essentially of a domestic nature, contain relatively high status items, including high-quality bucchero imported from Cerveteri in southern Etruria, and bones from choice cuts of meat.³ The finds are therefore consistent with the remains of domestic activity, perhaps by high status individuals, possibly “aristocratic” feasting, but they could also be consistent with offerings to an as yet unlocated sanctuary at the site, pre-dating the first stone sanctuary and belonging to the hypothesized settlement of huts. During this early period, it is perhaps unwise to insist on a too rigid separation between domestic and ritual activity on the basis of the current evidence. The dating of the context to the seventh or possibly the beginning of the sixth century BCE is discussed in detail below.

The shard has the edge of a foot ring rising at one edge of a break marked by a 2.8 mm wide burnished groove. This tenuous evidence suggests the vessel of which the shard is a part was a bowl or lid (see Fig. 1–2). The most likely form of the vessel is a carinated bowl that might also function as a lid. The shape is very common at Poggio Colla (Fig. 3) and frequently found across northern and central Etruria as well.⁴ One complete and one partial stamp of a scene with a human figure survive on the lower part of the wall of the vessel. The head of the figure points away from the foot ring, suggesting that if the figure (Fig. 4) were upright

³ Perkins forthcoming; personal communication by Angela Trentacoste who is publishing the faunal remains.

⁴ Perkins 2007, 18–9 No. 28 for examples with a low foot ring and Perkins 2007, 36 No. 119 for examples with a high foot.



Fig. 4: Photograph of the stamp. (Photo: P.Perkins).

then the form would be a bowl. This is not a certain indication of the form because inverted stamps have been found on forms that appear to be bowls rather than lids. Overall, it is best to assume that the vessel may have had a dual function. The stamps do not appear to have been evenly spaced around the bowl or lid because their positions do not form a regular continuous frieze. There is also space for another stamp on the wall of the vessel. At Poggio Colla, stamps commonly form friezes above or below carinations or around rims. Isolated stamps occur too, but positioning them near a foot ring is unusual.

Find 11-003 has a dark grey brown (Gley 1 2.5/10Y) surface with a dark red (2.5YR 6/6) core and is 5.7 mm thick. Its somewhat coarse fabric could be considered an impasto when compared to bucchero sottile from southern Etruria, but it falls within the range of local fabrics described as bucchero. The core of the fabric is only visible in an ancient break and as a result, the description cannot be considered exhaustive. The break was inspected at x10 magnification and the visible inclusions were:

Description	Frequency	Sorting	Rounding	Size
White crystal	Few	Poor	Angular	<0.5
Silver mica	Common	Good	Platelet	<0.1
Orange and yellow grog	Common	Poor	Angular	<0.5

Tab. 1: Visible mineral inclusions in the fabric.

All in all, this combination of color and mineral inclusions are typical of locally-produced fabrics at Poggio Colla. In addition, the shard's surface is well-burnished and smooth, though slightly uneven, suggesting that its vessel may have been finished by burnishing on a slow wheel rather than made entirely on a fast wheel, a technological feature that helps to place the artifact in the second half of the seventh or the early sixth centuries BCE. The fabric, moreover, suggests that Find 11-003 was probably produced at Poggio Colla itself. Excavations in 2009–2010 on the north western slopes of the hill found three ceramic kilns dating from the late seventh to sixth centuries although no specific evidence for the production of bucchero.

The rectangular cartouche (11.3 x 6.1 mm) has a groove around the edge and within that a rectangular frame fringed on the inside with short oblique strokes sloping down to right on both sides and down to left along the top and bottom. Within this frame is a human figure with torso, head and one arm drawn in profile facing to the right (see Figs. 2–3 and 4). The face is summarily defined by three oblique points representing hair or a brow, the nose and a chin. A long back braid runs from the head down over the back and the forearm is raised with the hand at the level of the face and holding a lenticular object. The figure has a narrow waist and crouches with knees raised and legs spread with the lower legs extending to the bottom of the cartouche. The feet are indistinct. Between the legs, two rounded shapes appear from below the buttocks, possibly the head and shoulders of a baby drawn in profile although there are no facial features. There is a slight diagonal mark to the right of the baby's head. It appears on both the stamps but it may not be part of the design as it is fainter than the remainder of the stamp. If it is a deliberate mark, it may represent the baby's arm.

Technique

The stamp impression was created by a rectangular metope stamp. No stamps for impressing bucchero have ever been found, although a bronze rosette from Poggio Civitate (Murlo) has been tentatively linked with decorating impasto.⁵ The size and intricate decoration of the stamp impression suggest it might have been made by the impression of a gem. It is conceivable that the stamp is the impression of a steatite (soapstone) gem: this material is found in Tuscany and the cutting technique does not appear to use the later technique of cutting with

5 Phillips 1994, 55 and Figs. 4.38–9 (no. 250; Warden 1985, 117 and Fig. 37 (no. 224).

a drill.⁶ However, most Etruscan gems are oval in shape, and they are rare in the Orientalizing period, only becoming more common in the later sixth century.⁷ The fringed frame is reminiscent of borders on later Archaic gems, although these tend to have the oblique strokes enclosed between two grooves. The stamp could equally well have been produced by a metal, bone, clay or wooden die.

Interpretation

The Poggio Colla stamp clearly depicts a human figure within a rectangular frame elaborated with oblique strokes on the interior edge. This might be simply a conventional frame, not unlike those found on later Archaic Etruscan gems.⁸ The frame may also symbolize a setting for the scene on the stamp, perhaps alluding to a grove or uncultivated woodland. Although “scenery” and natural settings are rare in early Etruscan art, trees appear on either side of the lower panel on the Verucchio throne,⁹ in combination with a goat on an ivory plaque from Comeana,¹⁰ on a stele from Bologna,¹¹ and on a bronze cista from Matelica.¹² A cylinder stamp impression on an impasto (red ware) kantharos handle in Heidelberg, features a wild goat grazing a tree although its front legs are firmly on the ground.¹³ A goat also nibbles a tree on another stamp from Poggio Colla, but the leaves are not represented by oblique strokes.¹⁴ In addition, some ethnographically-studied societies use a “birthing grove” or a simple birthing hut structure for labor and delivery, and this might be an appropriate interpretation of the stamp’s frame.¹⁵

6 See, for example, the eagle from a Corinthian gem stamped onto a buccheoid impasto bowl from Chiavari in Liguria (De Marinis 2004, 201 and Fig. 8; Giovannelli 2008, 78–9).

7 A sub-rectangular Orientalizing gem of steatite has been found Poggio Civitate and features a crouching male figure; however, it is larger than our stamp (see Phillips 1978, Figs. 1–4).

8 See Boardman 1975, nos. 123–70.

9 Von Eles 2002, 251–3.

10 Bettini and Nicosia 2000.

11 These date to the Villanovan IV period and are therefore broadly contemporary, or slightly earlier than the bucchero stamp. The stele shows heraldic pairs of goats on either side of a tree (e.g., the Pietra Malvasia Tortorelli or the stele from Saletto di Bentivoglio [with a sphinx] [Tovoli 1988]).

12 Metelica loc. Crocifisso Tomb 182, no. 41; Sabbatini 2008, 231–3.

13 Schmidt 1963, 17 and Pl. 53.3–4.

14 Perkins forthcoming.

15 Bolger 1992, 156–7.

The figure with the back braid, typical in the Orientalizing and early Archaic art of Etruria, may be securely identified as feminine.¹⁶ Her forearm is raised at the elbow and the extremity is drawn as a bifurcation. This may be simply a representation of her thumb and fingers, as often occurs on gems, or it could possibly indicate a rounded object held in her hand. If it is the latter, then it is represented with a short rounded line, not unlike the marks used in the oblique fringe of the frame, which, if indicating a natural setting, might be read as tree leaves. The object is not strongly articulated and therefore cannot be read as a frond, a lotus bud or even a pomegranate that could be interpreted as an attribute that would aid in the identification of a mythological or divine figure.

The woman's body below the waist is drawn in a frontal view. This twisted pose is difficult, although not impossible, to read as an anatomically correct naturalistic pose. A better reading would be to place the pose in the context of Geometric Italic traditions that do not always represent figurative scenes from a single viewpoint using a coherent system of "naturalistic" or canonical representation as adopted in later Greek art. Examples of Italic solutions to rendering complex scenes on two dimensional surfaces include helmeted figures and the wagon on the Verucchio throne.¹⁷ In addition, the woman's legs are represented with the knees drawn up, with the elongated lower legs running in parallel toward the lower edge of the frame and providing an overall configuration in the shape of a "M." Between the legs, there is no visible attempt to represent any genitalia, whether female or male. Finally, at the bottom of the right leg, there is a slight inflection that might be interpretable as a foot, but if so, it is not clearly drawn.

An alternative reading, now discounted, contends that the lower section of the stamp represents a throne or stool drawn in profile, with a seated figure, also in profile in the upper part. Such seated figures, both male and female, are common in Late Orientalizing and Archaic Etruria on Chiusine cylinder stamps or architectural terracotta revetments.¹⁸ However, these figures are drawn seated on stools with crossed legs (i.e., the *sella curulis/diphros*), or on a throne with vertical legs, a horizontal seat and a high back. On the Poggio Colla stamp, however, there is no indication of the obligatory high back or horizontal seat of a throne, or even the crossed legs of a stool. Nevertheless, the vertical lower legs do resemble the legs of a throne and the oblique thighs echo the profile view of a stool, perhaps hinting at the familiar Etruscan iconography of an enthroned

¹⁶ Bonfante 2003, 70, n.33.

¹⁷ Von Eles 2002, 247–8 where similarities are noted with rock art in the Valcamonica.

¹⁸ Scalia 1968 for Chiusine stamps, Rathje 2007, Fig. 4 and Winter 2009 186–7 for an e.g. from Murlo and Winter 2009, 372–4 for another from Velletri.

authority figure. However, the image does not constitute a coherent representation of a figure seated on a separate object.

Between the two legs and attached to the figure's buttocks are two vertically-aligned and connected circular shapes. Where they join, there is an indistinct oblique mark to the right. As with the remainder of the stamp, there is no distinct characterization visible on these shapes. However, given their position between the spread legs of a female figure and their connection with the pubic area, an interpretation as the upper torso and head of a partly-delivered baby seems inescapable. The oblique line may represent an arm, although the torso makes no attempt to represent a shoulder. If it is a baby's head and shoulders, then it is proportionally oversized when compared to the mother's body.

Before accepting this interpretation of the representation between the figure's legs, it is necessary to consider some alternatives because the possibility that the figure might be seated, resting or exercising on some other object should not be discounted. Seated figures on thrones are often represented with a bird, usually a waterfowl, between the legs of their thrones, and we are ignorant of the significance of this motif. Such birds, however, are usually clearly drawn, and the object on the stamp does not resemble a bird. The frontal squatting pose of a figure drawn with knees raised also occurs in some slightly later Greek representations. A human figure drawn between two waterfowl on an unpublished black figure stamnos in the Villa Giulia, for example, shares many characteristics with the pose seen in the Poggio Colla stamp. The head is drawn in profile and the knees appear raised, although the arms are turned down at the elbows with the hands resting on the knees. The male figure is clearly defecating although a more forgiving observer might see a poorly drawn satyr's horsetail between the legs which might suit the less than idealized profile of the face.¹⁹ The pose is paralleled on an Attic red figure cup by a female squatting over a large kotyle and apparently urinating.²⁰ The "squatting komast" pose, the conventional name for the configuration seen on a small group of Corinthian aryballoi with plastic modelling in the form of arms, raised legs and phallus,²¹ is also similar. Payne, moreover, remarks on how close the latter pose is to the one displayed by a crouching figure on Tarquinian reliefs: "The earliest example of this squatting type occurs on an ovoid

¹⁹ A likely satyr is urinating in a similar pose with one hand behind his back on a red figure vase, Moore 1998, 65, Pl.(1732) 455.6.

²⁰ For the red figure female from Orvieto, dated to 480 BCE, see Greiffenhagen 1962, 27 and Pl. 74.2.

²¹ Payne 1930, 180, n. 2; Broneer 1959, 335–336; Amyx 1988, 530–532; MFA Boston 01.8039, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/plastic-vase-180685>; Fairbanks 1928, no. 503; Biers 1992, 228–30 (no. 14); Morigi Govi and Vitali 1988, 176.

Protocorinthian aryballos at Corinth – a woman with knees drawn up and one foot on each of two phallus snakes.”²² Needless to say, these aryballoi only share features of the pose; the form of representation and its formal geometric properties differ, ruling out any possible argument that the aryballoi may have inspired the cutter of the Poggio Colla birthing stamp. Payne also provides examples of “padded dancers”—i.e., dancing females—in similar poses, but they, too, bear no relevance to the Etruscan scene.²³

In addition, satyrs and simian figures, although rarely represented on Attic pots²⁴ or in the form of bronze figurines, appear in a similar pose, but with either or both arms lowered as they masturbate.²⁵ Parallel scenes featuring females are not known in Etruria and only occur in later Attic red figure where they usually feature artificial penises;²⁶ these figures, therefore, do not correlate to what is represented on the Poggio Colla stamp.

A further possibility is that the scene might represent the process of fumigation (i.e. the introduction of vapors into the vagina) that is mentioned in Egyptian, Greek and Roman sources for purposes of contraception or other treatments.²⁷ However, there are no known visual representations of this process.

Finally, the pose found on the Poggio Colla shard could be interpreted as one that anticipates copulation, but such scenes are rare. Moreover, in a nearly contemporary representation of two scenes of copulation on the Tragliatella

22 Payne 1930, 180, n. 2; Brendel (1978, 454, n. 16) also suggests the pose is inspired by Corinthian work. See below for discussion of the Tarquinian reliefs.

23 Payne 1930, nos. 515 = BM 1884.10–11.48, 1004 and 1159. The example in Boston is dated to c. 570 BCE, later than our stamp, but the Middle to Late Corinthian period aryballos from Isthmia is more or less contemporary with it, dating to the late seventh century.

24 Bruni 1986, 35, n. 7; Simon 1997, 1020–1; Höckmann 1982, 25. E.g. in black figure, Friis Johansen 1963, 255, Pl. 327.3; Simon 1997, no. 112 pl. 764; seated on a stool playing a double-flute, Fellmann 2005, 62.4–7, 63.1–3; in red figure in a similar pose but holding a drinking horn in one hand, Paleothodoros 2004, 67, Fig. 23, Pl. 32.

25 See, for example, the aryballos from ca. 570 BCE now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA 26.49; Richter 1932) with legs in a similar pose but arms down and face frontal, and Corinthian terracotta figurines with one arm raised, dated to ca. 450 BCE, now in the British Museum (GR 1873.0820.570, GR 1877.1207.6) and in the same museum a similar simian figurine (GR 1873.0820.572).

26 An exception is the prone female on a red figure cup from Vulci now in Berlin (Boardman 1975, Fig. 112; Greiffenhagen 1962, 13–6 and Pl. 59.4). Therapeutic masturbation seems an unlikely option given its shaky documentation in the later literary sources (King 2011). A red figure fragment in Heidelberg with a frontal squatting female could be part of a similar scene Paleothodoros 2004, Pl. 21, Fig. 3 (I).

27 Kahun Medical Papyrus 20: Griffith 1898, 9; Jütte 2008, 46–7. I am indebted to Gina May for this suggestion.

oinochoe, the artist had significant difficulty representing the figures in a profile view and produced an awkward configuration of limbs.²⁸ This contrasts dramatically with what is found on our stamp.

Thus, the comparative material discussed above favors an interpretation of the shard's scene as one of parturition rather than as a scatological, therapeutic or autoerotic representation.

Part II: Comparanda: Birthing Imagery in Etruria, the Greek World, Cyprus, Crete, Southwest Asia, Egypt and Rome

The representation of a birthing human is unique in Etruscan material culture. There are, however, a number of related representations in Etruscan and other circum-Mediterranean cultures that enable further exploration of the stamp's symbolism. Because of the rarity of this type of image, the net will be cast widely in terms of place and time. In-depth discussion will, however, be limited to closely-related imagery. Works of art that depict pregnancy,²⁹ infants with their mothers or nurses,³⁰ female figures exposing their genitalia, and generic "fertility figures"³¹ are not considered in detail since the focus here is on the moment of birth.

Etruria

Six Tarquinian relief slabs³² (*lastroni a scala*), dated to the Archaic period, contain representations of an apparently naked female figure, in the same squatting pose as the female on the Poggio Colla stamp but with two raised arms. None have any trace of a baby being born or any other objects between the legs: rather, they all

²⁸ The Tragliatella oinochoe (630–600 BCE): Small 1986; Haynes 2000, 97–9 and Fig. 83.

²⁹ Grmek and Gourevitch (1998, Fig. 247) illustrate a "pregnant" woman lying on a bed represented on a vase from Tomb 19 at the Riserva del Ferrone in the Tolfa mountains (Baggiari 1998, 81). However, the definitive publication and illustration showing the body bound to the bed clearly demonstrate that this is a rare scene of *prothesis* (Brocato 2000, 245–6 and Figs. 248–52 [no. 41]).

³⁰ Bonfante 1989; *ibid.*, 1997; de Grummond 2004.

³¹ Murray 1934; Bonfante 2009.

³² Jannot 1980; Bruni 1986; *ibid.*, 1991. There are similar sculpted panels from Vulci (Bruni 1988).

crouch with their buttocks very close to the ground line, leaving no space for any additional imagery.

These *nenfro* or limestone slabs have been found in fragmentary condition, but where they have been hypothetically reconstructed, they form rectangular slabs measuring up to 3 x 2 m.³³ They have been found in association with Archaic tumuli, often around the tomb's entrance; however, none have been found in situ in this position and it is generally thought that they may have been salvaged from elsewhere and reused in the tumuli. In addition, their function is debated: the most commonly-held view is that they may have been used a door slab, sealing the tomb or a ceiling to the entrance passage (*dromos*). The only cases where an in situ find has been made (although not of slabs with figurative decoration) indicate a different location, embedded in the sloping enclosing wall of tumuli constructed of polygonal masonry. In this location, the slabs could function as a real stair providing ceremonial access to the tumulus top.³⁴ This find, however, has not led to a revision of opinions concerning the use of the slabs at the tomb entrance, where they may well have had a secondary function, perhaps because the in situ slabs only feature the step part of the reliefs and not the parts decorated with relief figures.

The Tarquinian slabs are typically divided into three vertical columns of figured metopes separated by two strips of "steps" or wedge-shaped cavities that would form a series of steps if the slab stood at an oblique angle. Each panel, and often the "steps" as well, are enclosed by a guilloche or cable pattern frame. The metope panels are linked at the bottom of the slab by a horizontal frieze running continuously from one side to the other. Each metope panel contains one or more figures, including humans, animals or fantastic beasts. These are often arranged in symmetrical pairs with the panels at the sides of the slabs being mirror images of one another while the central row contains different figures. In all cases where it is possible to identify the location of the squatting female, she occurs alone in the central row, at the bottom in two examples, and at the top in one, suggesting that she is an important element of the composition.³⁵ She also appears with various associations: flanked by horsemen (Fig. 5);³⁶ flanked by kneeling/running winged human-like figures and above a frieze of grazing stags being stalked by lions;³⁷ flanked by a crouching lion and a bird; and below a kneeling/running winged human-like figure and above a frieze of two half-female half-fish figures

³³ Maggiani 1996, 7–10 and Fig. 1; Leighton 2004, 90–1 and Fig. 38.

³⁴ Linnington 1980.

³⁵ Jannot 1980, 614–5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 609–10, no. D = Bruni 1986, 56–7, no. 16.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 608, no. A = Bruni 1986, 43–4, no. 11.



Fig. 5: Stone relief slab with a squatting female flanked by horsemen, from Tarquinia, sixth century BCE. Museo archeologico nazionale tarquiniese (Photo: La Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Etruria meridionale).

facing a central scrolled palmette.³⁸ Two final examples feature more complex compositions including human figures. On one, she is flanked by a standing spearman facing a clothed female with one arm raised at the elbow; above them is a crouching winged lion with a flower while above the crouching female, there is a scene of a standing male with one arm raised at the elbow in front of a clothed woman seated on a stool (*diphros*).³⁹ On the other, the crouching woman is flanked by a sphinx and a lion and below a caprid or cervid.⁴⁰ This slab has been associated with another fragment, on the basis of its dimensions, to create a more complex combination of metopes.⁴¹ This second fragment is the bottom part of a slab with a complete frieze representing, from the right (the starting point of an Etruscan reader), a male drawing his sword and running toward the center of the slab where a horseman rides toward the left; between them, a lion chases a stag that looks back over its shoulder at the pursuing lion. This scene has been interpreted as representing the Trojan Troilus (in the center) pursued by Achilles (on the right), with the lion pursuing the stag as some form of visual juxtaposition analogous to a Homeric simile. Ahead of the horseman runs a centaur with human front legs who confronts a male figure drawing a bow across an altar or block of stone; the figure has been identified as Hercules encounter-

³⁸ Ibid., 608, no. B = Bruni 1986, 90–1, no. 39.

³⁹ Ibid., 610–1, no. E = Bruni 1986, 35–9, no. 9.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 609, no. C = Bruni 1991, 48–9, no. 6.

⁴¹ Maggiani 1996, 14, Complesso I.

ing a centaur.⁴² Above this frieze are three small metopes, each representing three waterfowl walking to the left, and above these are three more metopes. On the right, a crouching griffin or panther faces right; in the center, a winged “demon” runs to the left; and on the left, we find a composition of three figures: on the right, a female in a long cloak that covers her head faces left with one arm raised looking toward the other two figures who both face left, are naked, and copulate. This scene is not identified but could depict a goddess assisting a heroic enterprise.⁴³ If the two slabs do fit together, then the crouching goddess would fit above the running winged “demon,” but this does not aid in the interpretation of the combination of metopes beyond associating the female in the birthing position with a scene of copulation. These more complex scenes appear to have some narrative content,⁴⁴ but beyond the apparently mythical or legendary encounters, the scenes can only be classified as warrior/female encounters, or as presentations surrounding the crouching female, combined with wild and fantastic beasts and the theme of reproduction.

Two of the crouching female figures on the slabs wear straps of some sort, while another one has a belt around her waist⁴⁵ and a fourth displays a collar connected to a vertical strap between the breasts along with a strap that binds together the thighs and may possibly be connected to the vertical strap.⁴⁶ The carving is no longer clear enough to interpret these as clothing, some other detail of the body, or as birthing accessories.⁴⁷ Where the hands are well enough preserved, the thumb is sculpted separately from the fingers in the same way as the hand is represented in our stamp. Finally, the figures do not appear to hold any objects in any of the slabs.

A significant feature of the slabs is their occurrence in a funerary context. This led Jean-René Jannot to propose that the crouching female figures represented a funerary fertility goddess associated with birth and death, perhaps associated with the passage to the underworld given her association with winged figures and fantastic beasts that might abduct the living.⁴⁸ This mythical association also relates to heroic killing and death. The funerary context of the Tarquinian slabs differs significantly from the settlement context of the Poggio Colla

⁴² *Ibid.*, 14, 19–20.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; Maggiani 2000; also, see further below.

⁴⁵ Bruni 1986, III.9 = Jannot no. E.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, III.16 = Jannot no. D.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, III.16 and III.39. Both also have lines incised along the thighs or calves that could represent details of musculature.

⁴⁸ Jannot 1980, 614–5.

stamp and the latter's clear representation of an actual birth. Themes of birth and death might be reconciled if death in the world of the living is conceived of as birth into the afterlife. In addition, both Jannot and Massimo Pallottino identified the crouching female as divine: Jannot named her the "Tarquinian goddess" and interpreted the pose as a birthing position, while Pallottino called her the "crouching goddess" or *dea accucciata*.⁴⁹

A crouching figure also appears on a Caeretan cylinder stamp on a brazier now in Heidelberg.⁵⁰ The stamp features a boar or feline with raised head, two horse-men with a branch between them, a panther with raised paw and a chimera (?), all of whom advance right toward a crouching figure seen frontally, possibly with head turned to the left, and both arms raised and bent at a right angle at the elbows. The stamp is unique although it does have a generic similarity to other scenes of humans hunting wild or fantastic animals on Caeretan cylinder stamps.⁵¹ There is no visible indication of the sex of the figure and no trace of an emerging baby. The figure crouches on a slightly raised platform represented by a horizontal line raised above the ground line trodden by the animals. Its feet appear on the edge of the platform and its buttocks are raised slightly above it, potentially providing space for a baby.

The platform in this stamp could possibly represent the "birthing bricks" attested in Mesopotamia and Egypt, but, as yet, undocumented in Etruria. In Sumer, the midwife goddess Aruru/Nintu is presented with a "brick of birth," and bricks may be mentioned in an Ugaritic text.⁵² Bricks associated with both practical and religious aspects of birthing are better documented in Egypt. There, the mother-to-be squatted on the bricks, associated with the goddess Meskhenet. These may have helped raise her above ground level for the birth. Isis, Nephthys and Heket act as midwives, and the baby is then placed on the brick while Meskhenet pronounces the baby's fate.⁵³ Ritual birthing bricks have been found in New Kingdom royal tombs and therefore may be associated with rebirth after death.⁵⁴ An actual example of a birthing brick has been excavated at Middle Kingdom Abydos (13th Dynasty c.1800–c.1650 BCE) in a domestic context, although it is not known whether it was a practical or a symbolic birthing aid. A reconstruction of the brick in use suggests that a similar squatting pose would

⁴⁹ Ibid.; Pallottino 1937, 198–200.

⁵⁰ Schmidt 1963, 18 and Pl. 54.6; Pieraccini 2003, 120 (type F4); Serra Ridgway 2010, 81 and Fig. 79 (type DB1); navigate to Heidelberg vol. II at <http://www.cvaonline.org> to view the stamp.

⁵¹ Serra Ridgway 2010, types CC1–8.

⁵² Stol and Wiggermann 2000, 110–22.

⁵³ Ibid., 118–22.

⁵⁴ Roth and Roehrig 2002.



Fig. 6: Bronze relief panel from a cart depicting a squatting gorgon, from Castel San Mariano (near Perugia), mid-sixth century BCE. Munich, Glyptothek.

have been adopted to give birth. This seems more likely than the precarious pose suggested from 19th century ethnographic work with knees resting on the bricks while the feet were on the ground.⁵⁵ Finally, the sides of the brick feature painted scenes of feline animals and a standing female figure which may be related to the Mistress of the Animals (*potnia theron*).⁵⁶

The Caeretan brazier stamp also features the crouching pose in association with felines and other animals, an observation that led Lisa Pieraccini to suggest that the figure may represent the Mistress of the Animals.⁵⁷ The association with animals and the raised arms are similar to the pose and attributes of the *potnia theron*, but the figure does not appear to grasp the panther approaching from one side or the boar departing on the other side. Nevertheless, the similarity between the poses of the figures on the Poggio Colla stamp, the Tarquinian relief slabs, and a gorgon which appears on a mid-sixth century BCE bronze relief panel (Fig. 6) on one end of a wagon found at Castel San Mariano near Perugia,⁵⁸ may support this interpretation since the latter grasps two lions by the throat as if she

⁵⁵ Stol and Wiggermann 2000, 119 and Fig. 4; Wegner 2009, 475 and Fig. 14.

⁵⁶ Wegner 2009.

⁵⁷ Pieraccini 2003, 120.

⁵⁸ Munich Glyptothek, fragment 2.3: Höckmann 1982, Pls. 11, 12.1, and 13.1 and 3.

were a “Mistress of the Animals.”⁵⁹ In addition, this gorgon, whose face is frontal, has her knees raised and wears a highly decorated tunic or cuirass and a skirt articulated with engraved geometric and floral patterns as well as panther’s heads. There is no trace of a baby or pregnancy. To either side beyond the lions she grabs by the throat are hippocamps above and stork-like birds below.

Thus, a gorgon appears on the rear of a *sitzwagen* in the guise of a Mistress of the Animals. In this role, she adopts the crouching pose that is otherwise unattested in Etruscan or Greek art, but if it is related to birthing, she is then fulfilling two roles of a nature goddess by birthing and dominating animals.⁶⁰ However, another gorgon also appears in the crouching position, wearing a kilt, as she gives birth to two winged horses (*pegasoi*) from her severed neck on a mid-fifth century gold *bullā* (pendant).⁶¹ In Greek mythology, Medusa gives birth to the winged horse Pegasus and the human Chrysaor from her neck when decapitated by Perseus, but in this Etruscan version of the myth, the decapitated gorgon gives “birth” to two *pegasoi* from her neck as she, quite appropriately, crouches in the birthing position. This birthing gorgon and the San Mariano “Mistress of the Animals” variation (Fig. 7), which was produced in a Chiusine workshop,⁶² are both later in date than the Poggio Colla stamp; nevertheless, they both provide further support for interpreting the crouching pose as indicative of birthing (and in one case, a mythical birth). A bronze disc breastplate dating to the third quarter of the seventh century, found in Tomb 17 at Pitinio near Macerata in Marche, is also decorated with an image that may be related to the birth of the *pegasoi*. Across its center are the heads and forequarters of two horses, joined at the body but facing away from one another. Beneath them is an inverted human figure with arms raised and legs spread in a birthing position so that the thighs connect with the bellies of the two horses. Between the horses’ necks stands an ithyphallic male with his arms raised. This scene has been associated with the “*despotes hippon*” (i.e., the “Master of the Horses”), although this view does not take into account the spread-legged figure beneath who could be giving birth to the twin horses.⁶³ Therefore, the scene could alternatively be interpreted as a

⁵⁹ Bruni (1986, 34) notes the similar crouching pose of the gorgon on the Castel San Mariano chariot, suggesting that the figures may have a similar, but unspecified, origin.

⁶⁰ Höckmann 1982, 23–6; Paribeni 1964, 253; Goldman 1961, 18; Maggiani 1996, 17; Marinatos 2000. A standing gorgon appears on a Rhodian plate from c. 600 BCE as Mistress of the Animals grasping two water fowl (British Museum GR 1860,0404.2).

⁶¹ British Museum GR1867.0508.524; Höckmann 1982, 25.

⁶² Höckmann 1982, 110.

⁶³ Naso 2000, 113, Pl.16; Landolfi 2008, 147, Fig. 72.



Fig. 7: Gold bulla embossed on each side with Medusa giving birth to two pegasoi from her neck, 475–425 BCE. London, British Museum, GR1867.0508.524. © Trustees of the British Museum.

representation of the killing of Medusa by Perseus and the birth of two *pegasoi* which features a vaginal delivery rather than a birth by decapitation.

A relief bronze sheet from Bomarzo, now in the Vatican Museums, features a gigantomachia frieze that includes, at the extreme left, a fragmentary figure in an unusual crouching pose. Only the lower part of the body survives and the sex is indeterminate. The figure has been identified as a satyr even though it has human feet, largely because of its satyr-like “squatting komast” pose and the fact that the nearest god in the frieze is Dionysos.⁶⁴ Bovini suggests a date in the second quarter of the fifth century based on similarities with the poses of the Attic satyrs discussed above. Bovini also notes the strongly developed musculature on the legs which suggests that the figure may be a male. However, both a satyr and a crouching figure seem somewhat out of place in this scene. If it is not a satyr, then the figure might represent a wounded giant in a rare pose. In the absence of any strong evidence for the figure being female, it would seem unwise to identify it with the Poggio Colla birthing figure.

Interestingly, there are no strong parallels for the Poggio Colla figure in the Archaic stone reliefs or the cylinder-stamped bucchero from Chiusi. There is a passing similarity with parts of a relief that features a structure, possibly a cave,

64 Vatican Museums, Inv.12280 (Vian 1951 91; Bovini 1941, 80–4 and Pl. 9). The identification as a satyr is rejected by Bruni (1986, 35, n. 7). Buranelli and Sannibale (1998, 236–9 and Figs. 79–80) present new illustrations following restoration.

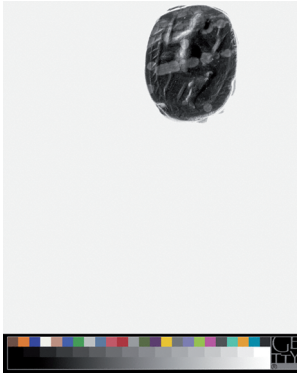


Fig. 8: Black obsidian a globolo scarab with a crouching figure, possibly Atlas, fourth/third century BCE. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, California, Gift of Stanley Ungar.

with a dressed female reclining above it with one raised arm and two further figures, and a reclining female in the “cave” below.⁶⁵ The structure appears to have slight diagonal hatching and so vaguely resembles the hatched surroundings of the stamp, suggesting that the relief might possibly represent a birth in a cave. Any narrative content of the scene is obscure.

None of the cylinder stamps used on bucchero at Chiusi represents an individual figure like the Poggio Colla stamp, which is an individual metope scene rather than a repeating frieze. There are, however, general stylistic similarities with figures typically drawn in profile, although there are also some frontal representations, including the Mistress of the Animals figures, “winged goddesses,” and dancing women.⁶⁶ This observation of a shared frontal pose once again brings together the crouching female with the Mistress of the Animals. A detail that is also shared is the use of the long back braid hair-do to identify a female figure, a convention that is common in Etruria in the seventh and early sixth centuries.⁶⁷ Occasionally the cylinder stamps contain representations of tree branches, either as part of a scene or held by a centaur, and these are not unlike the border seen on the Poggio Colla stamp.⁶⁸

Finally, an oval intaglio scarab (Fig. 8) in black obsidian, now in Malibu, shares some visual similarities with our stamp.⁶⁹ It has, in common with many other Etruscan gems, a diagonally-hatched border that resembles the shard’s

⁶⁵ Jannot 1984, 39 and Fig. 154 (Reliefs Groupe B’ famille III no. 3).

⁶⁶ Scalia 1968, motifs 18, 20, 21, 30–2, 40, 45.

⁶⁷ Bonfante 2003, 70.

⁶⁸ Scalia 1968, motifs 21, 45, 46, 51, 52.

⁶⁹ J. P. Getty Museum, no. 156, inv. 82.AN.162.12; Spier 1992, 73.

border. Within it, a figure sits on a two-legged stool; it is drawn in profile with one slightly-raised knee apparent and the other possibly hidden behind if a thickening of the leg is interpreted as the heel of the hidden leg. The two raised arms with hands partly open separating the thumb from the fingers also recall the arm and hand on the Poggio Colla stamp. The details are not very clear, given the “*a globolo*” style of the gem which dates it to the fourth-third centuries BCE, considerably later than our artifact. Its subject could conceivably be interpreted as a birthing mother in a different pose who uses a birthing-stool. It has, however, with reference to a sixth century BCE carnelian scarab in the British Museum,⁷⁰ been tentatively identified as Atlas supporting the heavens. The latter scarab, however, features a more convincing Atlas in a twisted pose with a beard and well-developed musculature; he also sits and raises his arms above his head.

The Greek World

Depictions of the moment of childbirth are either extremely rare or non-existent in Greek art.⁷¹ However, images of perinatal events are found: pregnant women occur sporadically at the Cave of the Nymphs at Pitsà, and the sanctuaries of Demeter at Corinth, Athena Cranaia at Elatea, Artemis Lochia on Delos, and Zeus Messapeus at Tsakona. They have also been found at the Asklepieion (?) on Kos as well as at Smyrna, Athens, Corinth, Lindos, possibly Myrina, and the Argive Heraeum.⁷² Kneeling female figures may symbolize, rather than attempt to represent, a birth-giving pose, but the evidence is not clear-cut.⁷³ This kneeling pose is closer to that occasionally represented in Egyptian art (see below) rather than the crouching or knees-raised position and could perhaps reflect a cultural difference in birthing practices. Nursing mothers (*kourotrophoi*) are much more common in Greek art,⁷⁴ while Attic grave stelai sometimes show

⁷⁰ Walters 1926, no. 616 = 1872.0604.1168.

⁷¹ Dasen 2010, 296. Dierichs (2002), in a thorough synthesis and collection of visual sources, reinforces this impression. See Demand 1994 for a text-based discussion of Greek birth. Wise (2007, 101–252) collects the visual evidence related to votives. The “Greek” relief illustrated by Sigerist (1961), Phillips (1973) and discussed by Jannot (1980, 611) is analyzed with similar “Roman” reliefs below.

⁷² Wise 2007, 118–21, 128–43; Van Straten 1981, 99, n. 172; Orlandos 1965, 206 and Fig. 229; Merker 2000, 196–7 (H368 and H373, discussed with “parodies”); Bruneau 1970, 191–4. Relief No. 2 does not present a very convincing pregnant offerand (Plassart 1929, 302 and Fig. 248).

⁷³ Wise 2007, 143–56.

⁷⁴ Ducaté Paarmann 2005; Bonfante 1997; Price 1978; Wise 2007, 157–62; these also occur in the Bronze Age (see Budin 2011).



Fig. 9: Terracotta figurine depicting a naked female in a birthing position (a so-called “Baubo” figurine), from Greece, first/second century CE. London, British Museum, GR1982.0406.11. © Trustees of the British Museum.

swaddled babies being presented to their dying mothers but never the moment of birth.⁷⁵

A further class of Greek imagery are the so-called Baubo figurines (Fig. 9). They depict a naked female in a birthing position with raised knees exposing the genital area. The figure is typically corpulent, or perhaps in the latter stages of pregnancy, but in no cases is a baby seen emerging. Quite often one or both hands touch the genital area, an action perhaps associated with easing a birth or a gesture that draws attention to the genitals for erotic or apotropaic purposes. A sub-group of glass amulets were possibly made in Phoenicia and are relatively widespread in the Greek world although not particularly common or well-dated beyond the Hellenistic period.⁷⁶ It seems they were far more popular in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt (see below).

⁷⁵ For Attic grave stelai showing females assumed to have died in childbirth and a baby held by a nurse, see British Museum GR 1894.6–16.1; Clairmont 1993, Cat. nos. 2.457, 2.778, 2.917, 3.282, 3.340, 3.375, 3.442, 3.463a, 4.425, 4.470; Rijkesmuseum I 1903/2.1; Munich Glyptothek DV 32 (Clairmont 1993, cat. no. 2.759). Sackler Museum, Harvard University 1905.8 (from the Classical period, c. 330 BCE), Stewart and Gray 2000; Wise 2007, 239–48.

⁷⁶ Tatton-Brown 1995, 39; Wise 2007, 121–7; Simpson 2004; Karaghiorga-Stathacopoulou 1986, for examples from Delos, Elatea, Clazomenae, Troy?, Tarsus, Acre, Cyrenaica and Merv, see British Museum GR 1856.1001.58, GR 1868.0501.6, GR 1871.0616.22, GR 1976.1001.9–10, and GR 1979.1218.82).

These figurines are named after an elderly woman, Baubo, who, in an incident at Eleusis, attempts to console a distraught Demeter by lifting her skirts and exposing her genitals. The Orphic source does not make clear the significance of this gesture of *anasyrma* or why it has a humorous effect. Moreover, the text has had a complex transmission which has resulted in fantastic versions of the encounter.⁷⁷ Thus, the figurines may not be closely related to the story since the women crouch and are often naked, rather than revealing themselves with the *anasyrma* gesture. Indeed, there is a considerable conflation of different traditions in the scholarship: the Eleusinian Baubo, for example, is also identified with figurines from Priene that feature a gesture of *anasyrma* combined with a female face on the abdomen,⁷⁸ as well as with the figurines and amulets of a female in a birthing position found in the Aegean and Egypt.

Several mythical births drew the attention of Greek artists but the moment of birth was never depicted. Leto, for example, has been identified on a Theban relief pithos in Athens.⁷⁹ She stands fully clothed with a small figure, probably a child, to either side (most likely, her children, Artemis and Apollo), and flanked by lions. An alternate reading views this scene as depicting Artemis supported by two Eileithyiai acting as midwives.⁸⁰ The Greek goddess of childbirth, Eileithyia is closely associated with Hera and Artemis.⁸¹ A third interpretation considers the figure to be the Mistress of the Animals because she is flanked by heraldic lions.⁸² However, the Poggio Colla stamp is unlike this representation, as well as the other scenes identified as depicting either Leto or Artemis.⁸³

Despite her status as a protector of women in childbirth, the Greeks never depicted Artemis giving birth: she is, after all, the quintessential virgin goddess. As Artemis Eileithyia, however, she plays a role in perinatal events, loosening the belt of a pregnant female to facilitate the birth.⁸⁴ This role might possibly be related to the belt and straps seen on two of the Tarquinian figures of crouching women.⁸⁵ Eileithyia also delays the birth of Hercules from Alcmene, although this Homeric story did not attract visual representations.⁸⁶

77 Olender 1985; *ibid.*, 1990; Simpson 2004, 228–30; Marcovich (1986) also clarifies the tangled versions of the story.

78 Olender 1985; *ibid.*, 1990; Karaghiorga-Stathacopoulou 1986.

79 Kontoleon 1970, Figs. 56–7; Kahil and Icard-Gianolio 1992, 258.

80 Kahil and Icard-Gianolio 1984, 676 (no. 722); Price 1971, 67 (no. 6 b); Caskey 1976, 33.

81 Graf 2012.

82 Caskey 1976, 32–3 and Figs. 12–3.

83 Price 1971; Dierichs 2002, 38–41.

84 Kahil and Icard-Gianolio 1984, 676 (no. 721 a); King 1983, 120–2.

85 See above and notes 24–25.

86 Homer *Il.* 19.95–119.



Fig. 10: Engraved Etruscan mirror, reverse, with Thalna supporting Tinia from behind and squeezing his abdomen to aid with the birth of Menrva, from Arezzo, mid-fourth century BCE. Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, Inv. 1073. (Drawing: Inghirami 1825, Pl.10).

The only Greek births that are directly represented are unnatural mythological births:⁸⁷ Athena is born from the head of Zeus,⁸⁸ Dionysos from his thigh,⁸⁹ and Aphrodite from the sea.⁹⁰ The unnatural birth of Menrva from the head of Tinia, the Etruscan version of the birth of Athena, is represented several times on Etruscan mirrors, and on a late fourth century BCE example from Arezzo (Fig. 10), the divine midwife Thalna appears in a realistic pose, supporting Tinia from behind and squeezing his abdomen to help as Thanr assists the birth from his head.⁹¹

The absence of representations of human birth in Greek art contrasts with Cyprus and Crete where there are distinct clusters of images representing child-birth.

⁸⁷ Wise 2007, 232–9.

⁸⁸ For an example on a relief pithos from Tenos, see Kontoleon 1970, 215–36 and Figs. 52–3, 55; Dierichs 2002, 12–22 and Fig. 2.

⁸⁹ Dierichs 2002, 22–35.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44–7.

⁹¹ Inghirami 1825, Pl. 10; Sassatelli 1983, no. 13; Kennedy-Quigley (2001, 72) discusses the actions of Thalna while Maras (2001) examines the personality of Thanr.

Cyprus

The earliest representation of childbirth on Cyprus dates to the Middle Chalcolithic period (c. 3000 BCE) and forms part of a wider prehistoric tradition of generally similar representations.⁹² A terracotta figurine found at Kissonerga-Mosphilia has been interpreted as representing a birthing scene. The human form is recognisable, though not realistic, and what appears to be the head of an emerging baby is painted between the thighs of a stylized female. The find was made in a unique ceremonial context containing other non-birthing female figurines and a terracotta model of a house. The figurine has been interpreted as an amulet for use in birthing or ceremonies related to procreation.⁹³ The complexity of Cypriot cultural development, nevertheless, makes it impossible to claim continuity between this and later images of childbirth from the island.

A Late Cypriot (1400–1150 BCE) cylindrical seal stone (Fig. 11) now in Baltimore⁹⁴ displays two nude female figures with their buttocks resting on stools or blocks with their legs spread and knees bent. A pubic triangle is incised but there is no clear trace of a birth in progress. The incision is not clear and the stone is abraded; however, it might be the case that one of the figures has a more pinched waist and a pubic triangle larger in proportion to the abdomen, whereas the second appears to have a more distended abdomen with a large navel and relatively smaller pubic triangle with a marked vulva; she may also wear an elaborate headdress. The pose is typical of both childbirth and genital display, but it seems possible that one of these figures is visibly pregnant and the other not. Both have their arms extended and bent up at the elbow and they hold lily-like flowers on long stems in each of their hands. To the right of the more slender figure rears a rampant ibex with long curled horns, its head turned away from the female and its forepaws resting across her forearm. Above this is a four pointed star or similar motif, while below is another object, possibly a rock (or an inverted ox head). On the opposite side of the seal-stone, between the two women, stands another figure of indeterminate sex (male ?) clothed in a short tunic, with arms bent up at the elbows and possibly grasping the stems of the flowers above. To the right is an object, perhaps a rosette star, upon which the foot of one of the females may rest. Both women's pose and the possibility that one of them is pregnant relate the scene to fertility and childbirth while the ibex associates them

⁹² Goring 1991. It should be noted that the prehistoric comparanda are scattered in time and place, and therefore do not form a coherent cultural tradition.

⁹³ Bolger 1992, Fig. 5; Goring 1991; Icard-Gianolio 2004, 324 (no. 33).

⁹⁴ The Walters Art Museum 42.415: <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/30332/cylinder-seal-with-a-nude-goddess/>; Gordon 1939, 22 and Pl. 7 (no. 60).



Fig. 11: Cylindrical seal stone with a female in a birthing position, from Cyprus, 1400–1150 BCE (Late Cypriot period). Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum, Inv. 42.415. Acquired by Henry Walters, 1924.

with the Mistress of the Animals. The third human could conceivably represent a midwife or a fertility figure. Although elements of the scene, especially the pose and wild animal, are similar to the Etruscan representations discussed above, any direct relationship seems unlikely given their time difference and geographic separation.

Two further groups of Cypriot artifacts related to childbirth are at least contemporary with the Etruscans, although, once again, direct connections between Cyprus and Etruria are not well-documented, it is certainly possible that there were contacts between these two metal-rich areas of the Mediterranean. Two groups of figurines, one Archaic and the other Hellenistic in date, portray scenes closely related to childbirth. Unfortunately, their precise contexts are not known and the dating and find spots are uncertain although many of the later examples come from sites between Nicosia and Larnaca in the southeast of the island.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Seven figurines from this group are discussed by Vandervondelen (1997 and 2002) and Wise (2007, 156–7).

Typically, the hand-made Archaic terracotta groups are around 10 cm high and comprise three figures: the birthing mother is supported from behind by a second female with a third to the front between the mother's legs who acts as an assistant. Thus, the scenes represent the moments around birth. In some no babies are visible, while in others, the baby has partly emerged or the midwife holds the newborn. A group in Nicosia comes from the Lapithos cave sanctuary,⁹⁶ while the two now in Athens date to the 5th century BCE;⁹⁷ there are also three now in France, including two in the Louvre. Another one may come from Idalion,⁹⁸ and a final variant shows the mother being held by a midwife and possibly also holding her baby.⁹⁹

A series of early Hellenistic votive sculptures, carved from limestone, show a similar scene of a pregnant female dressed in a long robe, lying on an inclined bed and assisted by a midwife. Four in the Louvre are all from Golgoi.¹⁰⁰ Another poorly defined and damaged group is in the Musée Rolin in Autun, and shows the mother supported by an assistant with a midwife between her legs.¹⁰¹ In a similar but well-preserved example said to be from the temple at Golgoi, the midwife holds the newly-born baby.¹⁰² A similar sculpture in the British Museum is eroded and missing its heads, but was excavated at nearby Idalion,¹⁰³ and another was found close by at the sanctuary of Artemis Paralia at Kition.¹⁰⁴ A third limestone sculpture in the British Museum, possibly from Idalion (Fig. 12), shows a woman

96 Cyprus Museum Nicosia B.48, 54–6, 65; Karageorghis 1989, 86 (no. 85); Dikaios 1947, 135 and Pl. 25.2; Michaelides 2009, 101 and Fig. 16; Icard-Gianolio 2004, 324 (no. 34 = B.56); Vandenabeele 1988, 32; Karageorghis 1998, 78–9.

97 National Museum of Archaeology NMA 12205–6; Cohen 2010, 471–2 and Fig. 28.3; Bossert 1951, Fig. 156; Vandenabeele 1988, 32.

98 Louvre MNB 118.

99 Louvre AO22858; Karageorghis 1998, 79; Musée d'Archéologie Nationale, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, MAN18031 see <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/cf/htm/CSearchZ.aspx?o=&Total=1&FP=297053&E=2K1KTSG1DTZ97&SID=2K1KTSG1DTZ97&New=T&Pic=1&SubE=2C6-NU0HPIG6R>.

100 Louvre: AM 3028 = Hermary 1989, 422 (no. 914); AM 3368 = Hermary 1989, 443 (no. 915) features a small head emerging from beneath the robe between the feet of the mother; AM 3068 = Hermary 1989, 442 (no. 913) = Icard-Gianolio 2004, 324 (no. 35); AM 2929 = Hermary 1989, 443 (no. 916) has two standing women next the head of the mother.

101 Decaudin 1987, 9 and Pl. 5 (no. 12).

102 From the Cesnola Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art MMA 74. 51. 2698; Karageorghis 2000, 262 (no. 424); <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/130002715?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=74.51.2698&deptids=13&pos=1>.

103 British Museum, GR 1869.0608.54 (Sculpture C410).

104 British Museum, GR 1866.0101.334 (Sculpture C411).



Fig. 12: Limestone sculpture depicting a woman on a bed and either the head of a midwife or a baby between her feet, possibly from Idalion (Cyprus), early Hellenistic period. London, British Museum, Inv. GR 1855.1101. © Trustees of the British Museum.

lying on a bed with a long chiton pulled up to her knees with either the head of a midwife or the oversized head of an emerging baby between her feet.¹⁰⁵

All of these sculptures were votive objects, and their find spots, when known, are all sanctuaries where at least a part of the ritual activity involved dedicating images of childbirth, presumably to secure a safe delivery. Other votive objects from these sites suggest that childbirth was not the principal focus of these sanctuaries although other sculptures represent children with adults.¹⁰⁶ The precise identity of the deities involved is not known other than being another occurrence of an Artemis cult. Other cults may have been Apollonian, and therefore also closely related to Artemis. The concentration of these votives on this part of Cyprus is remarkable,¹⁰⁷ but it is not unique in the Eastern Mediterranean as similar evidence can be found on Crete.

Crete

The Minoans produced aryballoi in the form of pregnant females who, because they either kneel or crouch, are not unlike the later Corinthian “squatting komast” vases.¹⁰⁸ Later, during the Archaic and Classical periods, in addition to the

¹⁰⁵ British Museum, GR 1855.1101.26 (Sculpture C412); Dierichs 2002, 86–7 and Fig. 48.

¹⁰⁶ Hermary 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the myth that Ariadne died in childbirth at Amathus on the shores of Cyprus is relevant (Plut. *Vit. Thes.* 20. 3–5; Cueva 1996).

¹⁰⁸ Kanta and Davaras 2011, Fig. 17.

archaeological evidence, there is some textual evidence for cults of Eileithyia, a deity, according to Pausanias, who was born at Amnisus,¹⁰⁹ at various locations throughout the island.¹¹⁰ At Lato a statue fragment of a pregnant belly, possibly dating to the third quarter of seventh century, suggests cult activity related to childbirth.¹¹¹ This could be part of a votive to Eileithyia but other evidence suggests there was a cult of Artemis at this site.¹¹² Another early pregnant figure was found at the Peak Shrine at Kavousi.¹¹³

Far stronger evidence for a cult of Eileithyia comes from the cave sanctuary at Inatos in the south of the island. A large number of handmade terracotta votives from the cave, similar to those from Cyprus, represent various stages of the reproductive cycle including copulation, pregnancy, childbirth assisted by a midwife, fetuses and representations of fetuses travelling in boats.¹¹⁴ The copulating couples and birthing mothers with midwives are frequently modelled and set into the base of a bowl, forming an unusual votive object. These votives date between the mid-ninth and mid-eighth centuries BCE. The midwife figure may not actually represent Eileithyia for she has no divine attributes and she actively participates in the birth rather than being a bystander who only acts as a protective force. Perhaps the votives evoke the successful birth scene that the offerand hopes to secure, rather than any divine intervention in the birth.

Southwest Asia

As in the Greek world, representations of birthing images from the Near East are equally rare, with only a single figurine type representing a standing pregnant female known from Phoenicia.¹¹⁵ A Hellenistic group of small (c. 2.5 cm) glass pendants representing a “Baubo” figure (see above) may also have been made in Phoenicia.¹¹⁶

In Mesopotamia, similar squatting female figures, but without an emerging baby and often associated with scorpions, may be traced back to the Early Dynastic

109 Pausanias 1.18.5; Graf 2012.

110 Willetts 1958.

111 Ducrey and Picard 1969.

112 Terracotta plaques from Lato represent the *potnia theron* (or a winged figure with animals), griffins and sphinxes, the cortege of Artemis (Demargne 1929, 420–4 and Pl. I.30).

113 Wise 2007, 278 (no. 2.24); Price 1978, 85–6 (no. 32).

114 Faure 1964, 90–4; Wise 2007, 157; Kanta and Davaras 2011.

115 Culican 1969.

116 Previously discussed with reference to Greek finds. See *supra* 76.

period (first half of third millennium BCE) at Ur and the late fourth millennium BCE at Susa.¹¹⁷ A mid-third millennium seal in Chicago, for example, may contain a birthing scene. It depicts a supine figure in profile, who wears a long robe and reclines on a bed while a second figure kneels to the right of her feet with outstretched arms; a scorpion lies beneath the bed.¹¹⁸ A third millennium BCE lapis-lazuli amulet from Tepe Giyan, now in the Louvre, may also show a birth although the pose and details are not clear.¹¹⁹

In contrast, a bronze votive pin from Luristan, also in the Louvre, clearly represents this subject.¹²⁰ The mother holds her breasts in an Ishtar-like pose and has a heraldic animal, probably an antelope, to either side with their heads turned away. She is surrounded by rosettes and wears a conical headdress or hairstyle. Overall, she appears as the Mistress of the Animals, but perhaps uniquely, she is shown at the moment of birth with knees raised. The Mistress of the Animals is not an uncommon motif on Luristan bronzes: another “standard” represents her in a birthing pose with knees raised, but with no sign of a baby.¹²¹ The pin from Luristan is without a context but is generally considered to be a votive object from the temple at Sork Dum. Because it depicts a baby’s birth, it is the closest visual parallel to the scene on the Poggio Colla shard. It is not well-dated but probably was created later than the Etruscan stamp. There is no evidence for cultural contact between the Neo-Elamite kingdom in Luristan and Etruria, so it is perhaps best to consider their similarities as coincidental and the result of the fact that both objects represent the same moment of the human life cycle. In addition, both objects appear to have been influenced by the image of the Mistress of the Animals that originated in Mesopotamia¹²² and was also familiar in Etruria. An association between a birthing scene and Artemis or the Mistress of the Animals has appeared on several occasions and notwithstanding the apparent mismatch between the virgin goddess and childbirth, this pin represents the only published example of

117 Legrain 1936, Figs. 268–70; Moorey 1979, 115 and Fig. 4 (no. 597); Teissier 1984, 59, 195 (no. 334); Amiet 1972, 618 (no. 616).

118 Battini 2002; University of Chicago, Oriental Institute Museum A27902; <http://teachmiddleeast.lib.uchicago.edu/historical-perspectives/the-question-of-identity/before-islam-mesopotamia/image-resource-bank/image-15.html>.

119 Louvre AO 31921; http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=26049.

120 Jannot 1980; Godard 1965, Fig. 62; Goldman 1961, 18; <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/cf/htm/CSearchZ.aspx?o=&Total=100&FP=296429&E=2K1KTSg1DT5ZK&SID=2K1KTSg1DT5Z-K&New=T&Pic=5&SubE=2C6NU0JDLW7>.

121 Louvre AO 25006; http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=23256&langue=fr.

122 Marinatos 2000.

an explicit association between the goddess and birthing that it has been possible to identify.

Egypt

Later first millennium BCE Egypt seems to be a context where the representation of birth was less restricted than in Greece. Indeed, much earlier, “to give birth” is represented by an Old Kingdom composite hieroglyph depicting a kneeling woman in profile giving birth to the sign *mś*,¹²³ a three pronged shape that, by the Ptolemaic period, had become an ideogram of the head and arms of an emerging baby, as at Kom Ombo (Fig. 13).¹²⁴ Representations of divine births appear particularly at *mammisis* (subsidiary temples for a divine child), the earliest of which, at Dendera, dates to the early fourth century BCE.¹²⁵ The ideogram shows a kneeling birthing position, as in some Greek figurines (see above), and is consistent with the use of birthing bricks.¹²⁶ Scenes featuring birthing stools also occur. A characteristic hourglass-shaped stool with a cup-shaped seat has been suggested as a birthing stool, although strictly, the images only show a nursing, not a birthing, mother.¹²⁷ Other birthing stools are more convincing: these include a “mummy plaque” found in Hawara and dated to the second century CE showing a figure crouching on a tripod birthing stool who wears a necklace bracelet and shawl,¹²⁸ and a four-legged wooden birthing stool with a longitudinal slot in the seat preserved in Cairo.¹²⁹ A Ptolemaic terracotta figurine in the British Museum takes the form of a fully-clothed female with a slightly distended abdomen—presumably a sign of her pregnancy—sitting on a seat that appears to be solid rather than slotted like the birthing stools, but while this scene may show a birth, its interpretation remains tentative.¹³⁰ In addition, a red jasper gem (Fig. 14) depicts a crouching female on a stool-like structure; it presumably had an amuletic function as it is enclosed by a snake biting its tail (*ouroboros*) and a

123 Fischer 1977, 9–10.

124 Fairman 1945, 98.

125 Reign of Nectanebo I: 380–64 BCE; Dumas 1977; Kockelmann 2011, 2.

126 Supra notes 53–56.

127 Schulman 1985.

128 Dasen 2008, Fig. 2 a.

129 Cairo Museum 56.353 from the 18th Dynasty (ca. 1550–1295 BCE); Hanson 1998, 288 and Fig. 33 a.

130 British Museum, GR 1992.0811.1; additional examples are in the Roemer-und Pelizaeus-Museum, Hildesheim, Inv. no. 0638 and London, Petrie Museum, UC 49883: see Hanson 1998, 288 and Fig. 33 b.

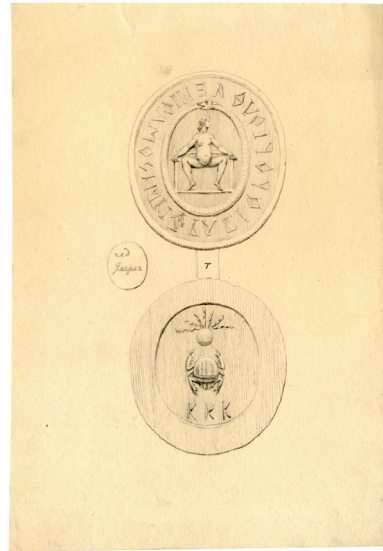


Fig. 13: Relief with the hieroglyphic ideogram of childbirth, from Kom Ombo (Egypt), Ptolomaic period. London, British Museum, GR1839.0921.704. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 14: Red jasper gem depicting a crouching female on a stool enclosed by a snake biting its tail, provenience: Townley Collection, drawn 1768–1805 CE, Ptolemaic, London, British Museum, G389.2010.5006.585. © Trustees of the British Museum.

cryptic Greek-like inscription.¹³¹ Other gems from the third century CE show females squatting, one with arms lowered possibly holding up her gown and the other pouring liquid from a jug with one hand and washing her genitals with the other.¹³² Finally, nine cubic blocks of limestone dating from the Ptolomaic and Roman periods were molds for plaques that feature the crouching figure of a female with elaborate hair, necklace, bracelets and ankle rings, all typical of Isis. One of the best preserved is in Brussels and dates to the second century CE. It is engraved with a crouching female figure in association with five other scenes: a horned altar, a bull kneeling on the ground, a walking bull (both with sacrificial implements), a pig, and Harpocrates on horseback. Each is on a separate face of the cube so they may be only indirectly related. Nevertheless, the scenes have been interpreted as a sacrifice to “Baubo” when she was visited by Harpo-

131 Tassie and Raspe 1791, 44 (no. 501). A drawing of the gem is in the British Museum, G389.2010.5006.585 (Dasen 2009, 46 and Fig. 3).

132 Both are of unknown origin and are now in Kassel and Hamburg, respectively; they are usually included with the previous gem although there is no known link to Egypt (Dierichs 2002, 208 and Figs. 120–1).

crates.¹³³ Another unique figurine represents Baubo riding on the head of Harpocrates on horseback, reinforcing the connection between the two.¹³⁴ There is no sign of a baby, however, in any of these examples.

Figurines representing females in the birthing position with knees raised—the so-called “Baubo pose” similar to those already discussed from Greece and the Aegean—were likewise popular in Ptolemaic and later Egypt. These figurines may even be Egyptian in origin and connected to the role of Isis in fertility.¹³⁵ They are found in tombs, perhaps assuring rebirth of sexuality in the afterlife or relating to death in childbirth. Alternatively, they may be performing an apotropaic or prophylactic function in the afterlife as they may have done in the world of the living.¹³⁶ The figurines are similar in that they represent a female, perhaps obese or simply pregnant, with knees raised and legs spread to varying extents. They often wear some form of shawl drawn back over the shoulders to reveal their nakedness, although they also wear belts, necklaces or anklets, again, all attributes of Isis. Finally, their hair depicts complex coiffures that perhaps reflect contemporary Roman styles.¹³⁷

A painted late fourth-early third century Ptolemaic sepulchral stele from Alexandria with a half naked female supported by two others is thought to represent a death in childbirth. The image has now deteriorated but was clear in the late 19th century when it was first published.¹³⁸

Rome

Roman visual representations of birth are also rare and confined to scenes of midwives at work and babies or children being held by their mothers.¹³⁹ Best known is the relief from the tomb of Scribonia Attica at Isola Sacra, Ostia, that depicts a parturient on a birthing stool, supported from behind by an assistant while the midwife kneels and assesses the progress of the delivery with one hand.¹⁴⁰ A

133 Nachtergaele 1998; Dasen 2008, 47 and Fig. 4; Brussels MRAH E 8989; <http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=1493>.

134 Karaghiorga-Stathacopoulou 1986.

135 *Ibid.*, 89.

136 Dasen 2009, 46–50.

137 Karaghiorga-Stathacopoulou 1986; Simpson 2004; for examples in the British Museum: 1886.0401.1452; 1925.1120.6; 1926.0930.62; 1965.0930.947; and 1982.0406.11.

138 Metropolitan Museum of Art, Inv. 04.17.1; Merriam 1887, 266–7; Marco 2009, 7 and Fig. 6.

139 E.g. the deity Fecunditas: see Ganschow 1999.

140 Kampen 1981, 69–72, 116–17; *ibid.*, 1982, 69–72. The Isola Sacra Tomb 100 is dated to ca. 140 CE.

generally similar composition is represented on a bone plaque, probably from a piece of furniture from Pompeii. The parturient sits on a stool and holds a staff in one hand; she grips an assistant, who stands behind her, with her other hand. Facing her in a kneeling pose is the midwife, who reaches toward her knees, holding an object, possibly a sponge, in one hand. Behind her, a standing woman extends her arms toward the parturient.¹⁴¹ These compositions are very similar to the Cypriot and Cretan votive groups discussed above.

Four additional marble relief panels represent various moments in childbirth while a fifth has a scene of breastfeeding; all, however, are of unknown provenience and/or whereabouts. The panels share many stylistic features and may even form part of a narrative sequence of the stages of childbirth. The first shows the moment of crowning with a naked parturient squatting on a birthing stool supported by two females, one with her hair tied in a bun, while two additional women kneel in the foreground, one holding out both hands to catch the baby.¹⁴² The second¹⁴³ (Fig. 15) depicts the naked parturient crouching on a cushioned and draped couch, or possibly a birthing stool, with the baby half-born (only its head and shoulders are visible). The baby is held by a semi-naked midwife seated on a stool who leans toward the mother and supports her arm. The midwife has her hair drawn into a bun in a style similar to the previous relief. Behind her is a ewer on a plinth. The third¹⁴⁴ (Fig. 16) features two similar individuals but the baby has already been born and is held by the midwife while the mother reclines with one foot on the ground and the other on a couch; her distended abdomen and vulva are clearly represented. Behind the midwife (who has her hair in a bun) is a bowl supported on a tripod. The furniture is also similar to that in the previous relief. The fourth panel¹⁴⁵ (Fig. 17) presents a different composition although the mother and midwife figures are similar. The naked mother now lies on a draped and pillowed couch as the fully-dressed

141 From Region I, Insula 2 and now in the Naples National Archaeological Museum, Inv.109905. Although we cannot be certain that the image represents a birth, the combination of supporting assistant and a kneeling female figure make it most likely. See Pazzini 1938, 46; and Kampen 1982, 69–72.

142 Wise 2007, 192 and Fig. 50; Phillips 1973, Fig. 3; Dunn 1997, Fig. 1; Siegerist (1961, 316 and Fig. 8) described it as fifth century BCE Greek. Jannot (1980, 611, n. 12) casts doubts on its authenticity.

143 Wellcome Library, London, Image M0003964EB. The object is untraced.

144 Wellcome Library, London, Image M0003964. The object is untraced but reported to have been in the collection of Professor Silvestro Baglioni, an eminent physiologist, and found near Rome (French 1987, n. 5 and Fig. 3).

145 Science Museum, London, Inv. A129245; said to have been excavated in Ostia, it was purchased in Rome in 1932.



Fig. 15: Roman relief panel of a mother, her half-born baby and a midwife, provenience unknown. Image M0003964EB, Wellcome Library, London.



Fig. 16: Roman relief panel with a representation of a mother, her newly born baby and a midwife, possibly from near Rome. Image M0003964, Wellcome Library, London.

midwife holds an object between her legs, possibly for the delivery of the placenta or for sponging her. Behind the midwife, an assistant holds the newborn on a cushion while another stands behind the couch holding a cloth. The final relief¹⁴⁶ (Fig. 18) has the same provenience as the fourth and depicts a clothed mother, possibly the same woman, reclining on a draped couch and supporting herself on one elbow as she breastfeeds a naked infant.

Doubts about the authenticity of these reliefs have been expressed due to their unusually explicit subject matter and the figures' non-classical poses.¹⁴⁷ Details of the faces, hair and furniture raise additional doubts, as do their lack of provenience, their origin in the 20th century antiquity market, and the absence of authentic ancient parallels. Moreover, the fact that the five reliefs form a reasonably homogenous stylistic group, when combined with their completely isolated subject matter, suggests that they should not be considered as authentic until more is known about their original contexts.¹⁴⁸

A relief now in the Wellcome Collection, perhaps a fragment of sarcophagus, contains another possible Roman childbirth scene.¹⁴⁹ Here, a naked female lies on her side on drapery with a clothed figure above holding a swaddled baby. Part of a third figure stands to the right holding a branch or torch. The scene, however, does not represent the moment of birth although it could depict a post-partum tableau.

Roman textual sources provide accounts of rituals associated with birth and protective or assistive deities for each of its stages,¹⁵⁰ but these do not provide help in interpreting the Etruscan scene on the Poggio Colla shard. In particular, the Roman deities associated with childbirth perform midwifery roles. For example, Juno Lucina protects the birthing mother. Her name may possibly be related to a sacred grove (*lucus*) on the slopes of the Esquiline hill in Rome,¹⁵¹ and this recalls the possible vegetation around the edge of the Poggio Colla stamp, although other sources derive her name from "*lux*" as she brings children to the light,¹⁵² a phrase still used in modern Italian. In addition, mythic births were not commonly represented in detail in ancient Rome, and those that are extant

146 Science Museum, London, Inv. A129246; said to be from Ostia, it was purchased in Rome in 1932.

147 Jannot 1980, 611, n. 12; Wise 2007, 193–4.

148 I am grateful to Janet Huskinson for discussing these reliefs.

149 R4516/1936: Wellcome Library, London, Image M0015414.

150 Koves – Zulauf 1990.

151 Pliny *Nat.* 16.235: in his day, a tree in the grove was thought to be over five hundred years old.

152 Ovid *Fast.* 2.449–50; Varro, *Ling.* 5, 69.



Fig. 17: Roman relief panel with a representation of a newly-born baby and a mother being cared for by two midwives, possibly from Ostia. London, Science Museum, Inv. A129245. Science Museum/Science & Society Picture Library.



Fig. 18: Roman relief panel with a representation of a mother breastfeeding her newly-born baby, possibly from Ostia. London, Science Museum, Inv. A129246. Image M0015210 Wellcome Library, London.

reproduce Greek models. The baby Dionysus is occasionally represented on sarcophagi with a dead or dying Semele but he never appears being born or reborn from Jupiter's thigh after having been transplanted from Semele's body.¹⁵³ Unusually, Adonis is represented being born from the tree into which his mother has been metamorphosed on a cast of a gem.¹⁵⁴ Ultimately, while gynaecological texts provide rich details of the medicine of childbirth, they do not help with interpreting the Etruscan stamp.¹⁵⁵ Rare textual amulets elicit protection or help in childbirth, but likewise add little to our understanding of the stamp's visual imagery.¹⁵⁶

Part III: Birthing Imagery in Non-Mediterranean Cultures

The comparanda discussed above all relate to the Mediterranean world and neighbouring areas. However, images of childbirth occur in many cultures from a wide range of time periods. Discussing them in detail is beyond the scope of this article but a brief selection will serve to illustrate the widespread occurrence of these images. A very early example is incised on a low stone bench in the "sanctuary" at Gobekli Tepe, Turkey, dated to c. 8000 BCE.¹⁵⁷ It clearly depicts a female in a birthing position with raised knees. She is either giving birth or being penetrated by an indeterminate and possibly phallic object. About 2000 years later, a terracotta statuette found at Çatalhöyük may also represent a similar scene. This small figurine depicts an enthroned corpulent female with a distended abdomen and a head between her feet, possibly that of a newborn baby. Felines stand to either side with their tails curled over her shoulders.¹⁵⁸ While this figure has inspired many scholars to see a mother goddess cult at

153 Baratte, 1989, 145 and Fig. 2 c; Matz 1968–1975, Pls. 116, 119.3 (no. 95), Matz 1969, 343–5 (nos. 195–9); Stewart and Gray 2000, 266–8.

154 Cades Collection, Impronti, Libro 7, Classe I, K, no. 87: <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/XDB/ASP/recordDetails.asp?id=B4B9B99C-E78A-4F49-B892-17FA53016731> but not necessarily ancient and illustrating Ov. *Met.* 10.503–18.

155 Dasen 2010.

156 Tomlin 2008.

157 Hodder and Meskell 2011, 239 and Fig. 6.

158 Mellaart 1963, 93–5, Figs. 31–2, and Pl. 24. Strictly speaking, this image does not represent a birth as the baby lies on the ground between the female's feet. Also, given the ritual use of severed heads at the site, it may be best to be cautious.

Çatalhöyük, recent excavations and reinterpretations have downplayed this possibility.¹⁵⁹

In the New World, a painted bowl from the Mimbres River valley in south western New Mexico contains a figure in silhouette with knees raised and hands on her knees with the head and arm of a baby emerging between her buttocks.¹⁶⁰ Emerging babies are also represented in Mayan and Moche pottery,¹⁶¹ as well as on artifacts from various parts of Africa.¹⁶² On the Indian subcontinent, the goddess Lajjā Gauri appears in anthropomorphised form, naked and crouching in the birthing position or reclining and exposing her genitalia with her knees raised from c. 400 CE;¹⁶³ subsequently, she become part of the Hindu pantheon.

Part IV: Conclusions

Chronology

Given the formal characteristics of the stamp's fabric (possibly made on a slow wheel) and its context, a date in the second half of the seventh or possibly the beginning of the sixth century is most likely for the Poggio Colla shard. Some of the bucchero from the same stratigraphic context dates to the middle of the seventh century (*bottega della tomba calabresi*) and provides the earliest possible date. Many forms found in the same context (particularly *kotylai* and *kantharoi*) are securely dated to the last quarter of the seventh century and since fan decoration is very rare, a date in the last decades of the century is most reasonable. In addition, forms that could certainly be dated to the sixth century are absent. Finally, other stamped motifs from the same context fit well in the late Orientalizing period, supporting such a date for our stamp.¹⁶⁴ Overall the shard's context—a re-deposited layer of destruction material—contains a range of coarse

159 Meskell 1995; Hodder and Meskell 2011, 239.

160 Hegmon and Trevathan 1996; also see Shaffer, Gardner and Shafer (1997) for other examples of birthing scenes.

161 Taube 1994; Lima, Museo Larco, Inv. ML004422.

162 For an example of a wooden statue showing childbirth from Angola, see Science Museum, London, Wellcome Images L0058714.

163 Sankalia 1960; Bolon 1992 (type 4). Other types have a lotus flower head (Nasim Kahn 2002; Elgood 2004, 335–6). Despite the striking similarity with the Poggio Colla bucchero shard, there is no opportunity to make a direct connection given the chronological and geographical separation.

164 Perkins forthcoming. The entire assemblage of bucchero from Poggio Colla is in the process of publication.

and fine ceramics that accumulated during the second half of the seventh century, while the hairstyle of the stamp's female figure corresponds to types typical of the seventh and first half of the sixth century.¹⁶⁵

This dating is earlier than that given to the shard's closest visual parallels, the early Archaic relief slabs from Tarquinia (see Fig. 5). However, their chronology is the subject of some debate, and an earlier date has been proposed that could just overlap with the latest possible date derived from the bucchero at Poggio Colla.¹⁶⁶ All the other Etruscan comparanda are later, making the Poggio Colla stamp the earliest extant representation of the crouching female figure in Etruria. Although the first millennium votive figurines from Inatos (Crete) are dated earlier (between the ninth and eighth centuries), all of the other votives from Greece and Cyprus are later. Thus, none of these eastern Mediterranean parallels provide strong dating evidence for the Etruscan shard.

Origin and identification of the female figure

The search for parallels and dating evidence makes it clear that it is not possible to trace a direct origin or inspiration for the image of a birthing woman on the Poggio Colla shard. The closest formal parallels, those actually representing a birth, are the Cypriot and Cretan figurines (see Figs. 11–12), the pin from Luristan, and the Egyptian hieroglyph (see Fig. 13), most of which are later in date than the Etruscan stamp. In all of these cases it is difficult to suggest any direct cultural connections. Although connection with the near-contemporary Cretan figurines is a theoretical possibility, there is no strong evidence for links between Etruria and Crete.

Representations of females in the crouching birthing position, but without a baby, are either later, or culturally unconnected to the Etruscan example. Again, although there is some indication of a generic relationship to the figure of the Near Eastern Mistress of the Animals, it has not proved possible to identify credible “prototypes” that may have inspired our representation. In these circumstances, it seems safe to suggest that the scene on the Poggio Colla bucchero shard is a uniquely Etruscan composition, and that any formal similarities are

165 Bonfante 2003, 70. The style appears on the Chiusine cylinder stamps dated to 600–550 BCE (see Perkins 2007, nos. 90–3).

166 Jannot (1980, 619) prefers 550–20 BCE; Bruni (1986, 35) suggests early in the first quarter of the sixth century and Maggiani (1996, 14) argues for the middle of the second quarter of the sixth century BCE.

due to the commonality of human childbirth rather than any strong cultural influences or diffusion of motifs.

In 1936, Pallottino noted the presence of a crouching female on the Tarquinia slabs (see Fig. 5), calling her simply “*dea accucciata*.”¹⁶⁷ Presumably, the identification of divine status was due to the woman’s nakedness, a feature associated with Near Eastern female deities. Her pose, with both arms raised, may also be associated with divine appearances in the Near East and Orientalizing Greece and Italy,¹⁶⁸ although on the Poggio Colla stamp, the mother has only one of her arms raised. Unlike Pallottino, Jannot connected the pose on the slabs with the crouching birthing position while noting the absence of babies and pregnant bellies.¹⁶⁹ He also likened the figure to the Greek Eileithyia, daughter of Hera, who appears on later mirrors with a pomegranate as attribute. The indistinct object that the female on our stamp holds, however, does not have any characteristics that suggest it is pomegranate.

Eileithyia and Hera were often assimilated with one another as well as with Juno Sospita in the Roman world.¹⁷⁰ Following this line of argument, we could equate the figure with the Etruscan goddess Uni. Eileithyia and Hera were also associated with childbirth as were the Etruscan deities, Thalna and Thanr, but only as midwives and protectors who stand to one side or assist the parturients, as in the figurines from the sanctuary of Eileithyia at Inatos. They never appear as giving birth themselves, the act depicted on the Poggio Colla stamp.

Stefano Bruni rejects Jannot’s identification of the Tarquinian female as Eileithyia, refusing to accept both the close reading of the sculptures as having distended genitalia and the relevance of the votive pin from Luristan. Instead, he suggests that the pose was a decorative motif with no further symbolic significance and argues that if there is a divine or mythic context for this woman, it is no longer recoverable.¹⁷¹

The only Etruscan goddess known to have produced a son is Cels, the Earth (associated with the Greek Gaia). He appears on a mirror from Populonia where he is identified as “*Cels clan*” or “son of Cels.”¹⁷² There are no known representa-

167 For the “the crouching goddess” identification, supra n. 49.

168 Maggiani (1996, 16) refers to the potentially birthing Leto on a Boetian pithos (supra n. 79), Faliscan impasto *ad incavo* ware (Biella 2007, 65 and Fig. 33 [no. I.X.1]), and a bucchero situla (Camporeale 1991, 107 [no. 94]).

169 Jannot 1980, 610–13.

170 Ibid., 615–7.

171 Jannot 1980, 608, 610, 617; Bruni 1986, 33–4.

172 TLE 368.

tions of the goddess although sanctuaries around Lake Trasimene have been hypothesised.¹⁷³

A “crouching goddess” but with no baby can be found on the Caeretan cylinder stamp on the rim of a brazier in Heidelberg. Lisa Pieraccini identifies her as the Mistress of the Animals since she appears with animals and horsemen. A similar figure on the Tarquinian relief slabs is also juxtaposed with animals and has likewise been interpreted as the Mistress of the Animals,¹⁷⁴ as has the gorgon in the birthing position on the Castel San Mariano cart (see Fig. 6). The role of *potnia theon* belonged to Greek Artemis but it is generally thought that Etruscan Artumes (the assimilated Artemis¹⁷⁵) was not associated with the Mistress of the Animals in Etruria.¹⁷⁶ This would suggest that the Etruscan crouching Mistress of the Animals scenes should not be associated with Artumes/Artemis. Nevertheless, Marjatta Nielson and Annette Rathje have suggested that the Etruscan *potnia theon* could be related to the Phoenician goddess Tanit, and if so, this would provide a link between Artemis and the Mistress of the Animals because Tanit has been identified with Artemis. They further suggest that in Etruria, Artemis may have been worshipped in connection with the fertility and female rites of passage at the Portonaccio sanctuary at Veii.¹⁷⁷ Despite these potential Etruscan connections between Artemis, birthing and the *potnia theon*, it remains difficult to imagine that the quintessentially virgin goddess Artemis is being shown in the process of giving birth on the Poggio Colla stamp.

Thus, our attempts to associate a name, whether Eileithyia, Uni/Hera, the Mistress of the Animals/Artemis or even Cels, with the Etruscan “crouching” or “birthing goddess” are inconclusive. It could be the case that the woman who appears in this guise is an unknown Etruscan deity who combines aspects of all these goddesses whilst also functioning as a mother and model for successful childbirth. In later Roman Egypt, Isis, Demeter, Artemis and Eileithyia all became closely associated,¹⁷⁸ and perhaps we are being optimistic if we hope to be able to clearly differentiate the roles and functions of these Etruscan deities. It must also be remembered that the identification of the figure on the shard as divine is only a hypothesis: she could just as easily be a mythic or mortal woman.

173 Colonna 1976.

174 Maggiani 1996, 17.

175 Nielsen and Rathje 2009.

176 Jannot 2005, 147; Krauskopf 1984, 787.

177 Nielsen and Rathje 2009, 267–72.

178 Dunand 1962; Delia 1998.

Narrative and Imagery in Etruscan Art at the end of the Orientalizing period

Visual narrative was barely developed in Etruscan art at the end of the seventh century, and there were very few images with strong narrative content before the Archaic period. The bronze tintinabulum from Bologna with its scenes of craft activity and perhaps aristocratic self-definition, the Verucchio throne that portrays weaving, processions and possible ritual activity, the Tragliatella oinochoe with its mythical or ritual narrative and the scenes inspired by the *Odyssey* on the Pania pyxis were exceptional. While the Poggio Colla birth scene is not in the same class as these images, it does have narrative content because it shows an event in progress rather than an isolated human or animal engaged in a non-specific activity, as was more common in the Etruscan Orientalizing period. This “self-contained narrative” is perhaps similar to the limited narrative contained in the images of lions eating human legs or preying on deer, or scenes of presentation where one human encounters another. This form of minimal narrative content has no development on the stamp and is not sustained to create episodic narratives through the combination of different stamps. Nevertheless, it may have a symbolic content that is now obscure or at best generic in terms of themes of humans struggling against nature or against each other.

Adriano Maggiani has considered the possibility of recreating a narrative from the juxtaposed scenes on the Tarquinian relief slabs (see Fig. 6) by developing Otto Brendel’s description of them as “speak[ing], as it were, in pure nouns, using verbs hardly at all.”¹⁷⁹ The Tarquinian reliefs are relevant to the discussion of the Poggio Colla stamp because, although slightly later in date, they frequently feature the “crouching goddess.” The reliefs are also divided into individual metopes, each representing an animal or a limited combination of humans, much like individual stamps on bucchero, including ours. Maggiani sees representations of animals (often in heraldic poses) as having a symbolic value perhaps signifying “wildness” or “hunting.” In contrast, he sees humans, often in pairs on the same metope, as being psychological exemplars or paradigms of specific behaviors and specifically denies them any symbolic value since this would not make sense.¹⁸⁰ It seems unnecessary to make this distinction since the “crouching goddess” figure could readily symbolize “sexuality,” “eroticism,” “life,” “fertility” or “woman,” and Maggiani himself goes on to suggest the first two of these.

¹⁷⁹ Brendel 1978, 124; Maggiani 1996, 15–20.

¹⁸⁰ Maggiani (1996, 16) states “... che non avrebbe alcun senso se applicato alla figura umana.”

Nevertheless, he also, quite rightly, insists on making any symbolic interpretation of the scenes on the Tarquinian reliefs with reference to their context, which is funerary, even if we are not sure of the precise function of the slabs in the architecture of the Tarquinian tumuli. This suggests that any interpretation of the Poggio Colla stamp must take account of its context both in terms of its relationship to other bucchero from the site and the stratum in which it was found.

Decorated bucchero with geometric or animal metope stamps is typical of northern Etruria and neighbouring areas in the seventh to early sixth centuries although stamps with human figures are relatively rare.¹⁸¹ These local productions feature individual animals and fantastic beasts along with geometric and vegetal motifs typical of the late Orientalizing period. The stamps appear individually, in groups or frequently in rows forming a file of animals around the rims of vessels. The latter are similar to those found on metalwork (particularly shields) and bucchero with graffito decoration.¹⁸² As noted, similarities exist not only with the sixth century Tarquinian relief slabs but also with the stamped pithoi and hearths from Cerveteri and with the Etrusco-Corinthian wares of the *senza graffito* group.¹⁸³ More general conceptual similarities may also be found in the cylinder stamped Archaic bucchero from Tarquinia, Orvieto and Chiusi.¹⁸⁴ These similarities may be due to the overall cultural milieu and the transition from the late Orientalizing to the Archaic period, but they may also correspond with a transition in manufacturing techniques with the increased use of stamping as a technique, either for individual motifs or as combinations to create limited compositions. Mario Torelli has related this transition to the rationalization of Orientalizing motifs and the emergence of “mass production” as Etruscan art develops from being derivative from Oriental models to establishing its own Archaic character.¹⁸⁵ The birthing woman from Poggio Colla thus takes her place alongside a late Orientalizing bestiary of birds, lions, wild goats, griffins, sphinxes and a winged centaur along with the plant and geometric motifs found on the locally-produced bucchero.¹⁸⁶ More widely, she is joined by winged lions and other unidentified beasts, including a running-kneeling gorgon-like figure in

181 Perkins forthcoming; Tovoli 1988, 229–30; Morigi Govi 1969; Scalia 1968; Gregori 1991; Donati 1991; Santocchini Gerg 2009, 223–6; Stoppani and Zamboni 2009, 359 and Fig. 11.10; Phillips 1994; Berkin 2003; Nicosia 1972; *ibid.*, 1974; Orlandini and Passigli 1990, 68; de Marinis 1994.

182 Bonamici 1974.

183 Bruni 1986; Locatelli 2004, 65–6 with references; Serra Ridgway 2010.

184 Camporeale 1972 a; *ibid.*, 1972 b; Tamburini 2004; Scalia 1968.

185 Torelli 1985, 62–4.

186 Perkins forthcoming.

the “*knielauf*” pose from nearby San Piero a Sieve.¹⁸⁷ Although the birthing woman stamp has not been found combined with other stamps, the broader context of bucchero stamps from Poggio Colla and elsewhere in northern Etruria suggests that she could be interpreted as a Mistress of the Animals given that she is the only woman represented among a host of animals. Maggiani, similarly, identifies the crouching goddess with the Mistress of the Animals, but uses the birthing pose to suggest she is the “*Signora della natura*” (i.e., Mistress of Nature), thereby associating the domination of the natural world with fertility and reproduction.¹⁸⁸ Although such a figure is not directly attested among Near Eastern representations, it is not inconsistent with them either,¹⁸⁹ and were it not for the birthing, our female could be connected to the figure of Artemis.

The context where the stamp, and much of the other bucchero from Poggio Colla, was found was a redeposited occupation stratum on a settlement. This indicates that its imagery was a regular part of visual and material culture, and not confined to funerary symbolism. As noted above, sphinxes, griffins and lions, sometimes in the company of a birthing mother, prowl across the bucchero cups, bowls and plates used by the Poggio Colla Orientalizing elite, contributing to the construction of their material aesthetics.¹⁹⁰ The technique of stamping was drawn from the relief decoration of metalwork, particularly elite arms such as shields, which enabled the ceramics to allude to military ideology. Given the similarity to engraved gems, it also alludes to elite status display. Representing friezes of dangerous and exotic or imaginary animals brings the dangers of the wild into the dining room, dangers that an elite warrior class would be capable of confronting and defeating. The female, if related to the Mistress of the Animals, might represent domination of the animals, or nature more broadly, but the specific representation of a child’s birth is difficult to relate to elite male ideology unless it can be read as affirming fertility and thus the continuity of the gentilitial bloodline into the future. Perhaps, the shard’s image also alludes to a powerful and inescapable female ideology of fertility and reproduction along with the power of nature and regeneration, which would be appropriate in an Etruscan banqueting context with both males and females present. Thus, the employment of the Orientalizing visual repertoire on these artifacts brings the elite of Poggio Colla into the mainstream of Mediterranean elite ideology.

187 de Marinis 1994, 43 and Fig. 2.

188 Maggiani 1996, 17; Höckmann 1982, 23–6; Paribeni 1964, 253; Goldman 1961, 18.

189 Marinatos 2000, 4.

190 See Riva (2010, 59–71) for a discussion of this concept with reference to Orientalizing technology in Etruria.

The preceding discussion of how images can perform an ideological role within material culture leads to a final consideration of the specific functions that an image of childbirth may have performed. Drawing upon the examples of the related images discussed above, a range of possible functions emerges for the Poggio Colla stamp: votive object, amulet, or a mythological or symbolic representation. Votive objects representing pregnancy, labor or birth are found in Greece, Crete, Cyprus and the Levant, although they are only common in Crete and Cyprus. Only occasionally has their context – the shrine at which they were offered – been well excavated and documented. Typically scholars use these votives to identify the cult at a site but because there is usually a plurality of cults at any one site, the identification of the deities worshipped is far from straightforward. Only in a very few cases, such as at the cave of Eileithyia at Inatos, is it possible to associate a coherent (if only partial) assemblage of votives with a single cult. Thus, these votive figurines may be considered as fertility figures in generic terms, but they were not set up to evoke protective deities, or as anatomical votives visualizing the part of the body requiring divine intervention or even votives of babies or nursing mothers – the desired result of the invocation.¹⁹¹ Instead they visualize a scenario of a birth, presumably a successful one, and are therefore invoking intervention in the process of birth itself in order to secure a successful outcome. Presumably the pin from Luristan, assumed to have a votive function, worked in a similar way although its representation includes animals and objects extraneous to an actual birth. The Poggio Colla stamp also visualizes a birth, but its context does not strongly suggest a votive function, even if the site soon became a sanctuary and ritual activity may well have taken place at the site before dedicated stone structures were constructed.

The representations of actual childbirth in Late Period, Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt are closely associated with *mammisis*, shrines to the birth of a god, depicting scenes from the god's life cycle.¹⁹² As such they relate more to the temple ideology and ritual than to votive religion and could only be interpreted as related to the Poggio Colla stamp if both are considered as representing a stage of a divine life cycle of either the mother or child. Representing a divine lifecycle could have been part of the visual culture at Poggio Colla, but to date, this stamp is the only episode that has been recovered.

The gesture of *anasyrma*, as either an expression of divine power, seduction, fertility or an apotropaic device for warding off enemies or evil,¹⁹³ becomes

191 Wise 2007, 179.

192 Kockelmann 2011.

193 Weber-Lehmann 2000; Bonfante 2009; Dasen 2009, 46–50.

directly associated with childbirth because some examples, particularly the “Baubo” figurines or amulets, may represent pregnant mothers about to give birth. In the absence of a baby, the adoption of the birthing position places emphasis on genital exposure as the dominant visual feature of the representations. The combination of *anasyrma* and the birthing position is perhaps a case where the gesture may be closely related to fertility.¹⁹⁴ In contrast, the instances where pregnancy is not apparent may function more on apotropaic and prophylactic levels, particularly when these scenes appear on amulets or seals. In Egypt, some of the “Baubo” figurines have been found in graves where they may assure rebirth of sexuality in the afterlife,¹⁹⁵ or relate to death conceived as a birth into the afterlife, a theme also appropriate to the crouching goddess on the Tarquinian relief slabs. It is difficult to ascribe a direct apotropaic or amuletic function to the stamp on the bowl from Poggio Colla, although supernatural protection in childbirth would have been desirable to the owner or user of the bowl, particularly if it was a woman.

This point raises the question of whether there was an intended viewer of this unusual stamp. Because of its small size, it only could be seen at close range, particularly as it appears on the underside of a bowl. It would have been more visible on the top of a lid, but still only legible close-up. The stamp's scale and positioning thus suggest that it was only intended to be viewed by a person holding the vessel. Equally unknowable is who the artisan was. Did a male or female craftsperson make the stamp and apply it to the vessel? In representing childbirth, this individual was not able to draw on a recognisable artistic tradition, for the image is unique and the earliest of the Etruscan childbirth-related scenes. At the same time, the stamp represents a birthing pose that seems to have been widespread in the Mediterranean. This suggests that it was generally recognised as representing the common cultural practice of childbirth in the vertical crouching position, and that the artisan, at least, knew of this as the local custom. It is also possible that there was a tradition of visual representation of childbirth in this vertical position of which the stamp is the sole surviving example. Ultimately, although it represents a traditional birthing position, the stamp's imagery remains highly-stylized and therefore it cannot be considered as simply a realistic representation of childbirth.

In addition to the pose being commonly found across the Mediterranean, another cultural convention seen on the Poggio Colla stamp is that the mother is alone as she gives birth. Most of the images of childbirth that have been discussed

¹⁹⁴ Compare the Romanesque Sheela-Na-Gig figures in northwest Europe: Oakley 2009.

¹⁹⁵ Dasen 2009, 48; Jannot 1980, 618–9.

in this article illustrate an assisted birth, commonly with a midwife and an assistant. A lone birth is therefore unusual because female-to-female support seems to have been a near universal ideal in childbirth in antiquity.¹⁹⁶ While it has been suggested that a midwife becomes necessary only when a supine birthing position is adopted,¹⁹⁷ the Southwest Asian and Egyptian examples indicate that vertical deliveries were also accompanied by divine female protectors.

The rarity in the Mediterranean of images of depicting the moment of childbirth suggests that either there was no general motivation for the production of such images, or, more likely, that a cultural taboo existed against representing this fundamental moment in the human lifecycle. In Greece, for example, artists only depicted divine and unnatural births.¹⁹⁸ Otherwise the act was indirectly alluded to by representations of pregnancy, swaddled infants and nursing mothers. Furthermore, birth scenes only appear in peripheral areas of the Greek world in Crete, Cyprus and Ptolomaic Egypt. Representing birthing also seems to have been unpopular in Rome and is euphemistically side-stepped by images of swaddled children or nursing mothers. Scenes of childbirth are likewise rare in Etruscan art, suggesting that the Etruscans operated with a similar mental framework.

Strongly-gendered images representing fundamental aspects of the female life cycle have been discussed with reference to the theoretical construction of gendered identity and feminist theory.¹⁹⁹ This discourse suggests that identity is created by an individual's constant exposure to socially-created models of behavior and appearance that may be embodied in either social action, or the artistic and visual representation of such roles. Read in this way, the Poggio Colla bucchero stamp presents childbirth as a fundamental female role in Etruscan culture and society. Nevertheless, because human figures of any kind are so rare in the late Orientalizing Period, they could only have formed a marginal part of identity formation, especially when compared to other features such as real life social interaction and role models that would have played a much more influential part in the development of a female identity than a very small and very rare image of human reproduction.

196 O'Donnell 2004, 166.

197 Lusted 1992. See King (2007) for an historical perspective but the area is under-researched in anthropological and medical studies.

198 Wise 2007, 249–52.

199 Brown 2001; Bahrani 2001, 28–39.

Abbreviations

TLE = Thesaurus Linguae Etruscae

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